

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
SOC 473:X01 (Sociology of Death and Dying)
Spring 2018 (May 7-June. 13)

Instructor: Bede Eke, Ph.D.

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Days: Tue & Thurs.

Time: 6:00- 8:50 PM

Class Room: T 1 108

Office Hours: 5:00-5:45 PM (Tuesdays & Thursdays) or by appointment.

Prerequisite: SOC 100 or consent of instructor.

Course Description

This course involves a comparative examination of death and dying in socio-cultural contexts, including theoretical and methodological issues. This course allows students to focus on questions of Dying and Death, and on Life and Living. The semester's work will emphasize the topics of grief, bereavement, aging, and the dying process as they relate to individuals and to caregivers. Attention is given to current American practices regarding death, as well as cross-cultural interpretations of dying, death, and bereavement. The course also addresses ethical issues as they relate to the area of dying and death in contemporary North American society.

Course Objectives

While this course is offered as a 400-level seminar, for most students it will be a first in-depth exposure to the sociology of dying, death and bereavement. To this end, one of the major objectives of this course is to familiarize students with the conceptual language used to examine the sociology of dying, death and bereavement, and to provide an overview of the seminal literature, research, and theory that are foundational to thanatology as a discipline. Other objectives include:

- To provide students with the knowledge to recognize the impact on individuals and society of the universality of death, and loss;
- To provide students with the knowledge of historical changes in the Western perception, experience, and treatment of dying, death, and bereavement;
- To equip the student with the skill to critically analyze personal experiences with dying, death and bereavement;
- To help students appreciate how unique the experience of dying, death and bereavement could be for each individual in terms of relationship, manner of death, complicating emotions, age, circumstances, cultural perception and treatment, etc.; and
- To provide students with the opportunity to develop both analytical and presentation skills through written term papers and class presentations.

Texts

1. Leming, M. R. and Dickinson, G. E. (2017). *Understanding Dying, Death, and Bereavement* (8th edition). USA: Wadsworth.

2. Northcott, H. C. and Wilson, D. M. (2016). *Dying and Death in Canada* (3rd Edition). Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Evaluation

The examinations will cover both the assigned readings, lectures and documentaries. There will be two examinations—Mid-term and Final. In addition to mid-term and final examinations, there will be in-class seminar presentations of assigned readings and a term paper. The following are the breakdown of the evaluations and the weight of each:

- Mid-term Examination-----30%
- Seminar Presentation-----10%
- Term Paper-----20%
- Final Examination-----40%
- Total-----100%

- The Mid-term examination will be held in class on Thursday, May 24, 2018.
- Roster for seminar presentation will be prepared and shared in class
- Term paper is due on June 7, 2018.
- The Final Exam Date, Time: June 14 @ 6:00 PM (**Check your Bear Tracks for confirmation!**)

Seminar Presentation of Assigned Topic or Chapter

1. You are required to make a 15-minute group oral presentation to the class based on an assigned topic/chapter of the required texts. Your classroom presentation is worth a total of 10% of your final grade. If your presentation has good content (beyond what is contained in the text), critical analysis, and style (that is, you hold the audience's attention and make the audience think), you will earn a good grade.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- 10% Very effective, outstanding
- 9% Very effective, excellent
- 8% Very good, better than average
- 7% Good, average
- 6% Room for improvement
- 5% Pass
- 0-4% Fail

Submission of Term Paper

You will write a 4-5 page term paper, plus title page and list of references used in the paper, on a topic relevant to dying, death, and/or bereavement. You should research your topic by referring to the textbooks first and then turning to the library and other sources for relevant information. You should cite 5-10 different sources and your two textbooks can be cited and counted as sources (while you may cite one of your textbooks several times in your paper, it would be counted as one source). You may cite academic publications, newspaper articles, internet web pages, etc. Do not cite only internet sources. Use a 12-point font such as Times New Roman, double spacing, 1 inch margins, and include page numbers. This paper is due on June 7, 2018 at the beginning of class. Papers submitted after this deadline will be penalized 10% per day and no paper will be accepted after [the final exam]. Your

term paper is worth a total of 20% of your final grade. You must hand in one copy of your paper in class and email another copy to me if you wish to receive feedback.

Paper Format

Use American Psychological Association (APA) format. If you don't have the APA manual, use Michael Harvey's The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing at <http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/apa.html>. or some such source available on line.

Within the paper, referencing should be author (date) or author (date, pp. ##) or (author, date, pp. ##). Consider the following example: Kent (1999) criticized the work of Stonehouse (1998, pp. 220-221) by referring to the strangeman thesis (Doonsebury, 1978, p. 5). The last page of your paper will contain a list of the references you have used. These should be listed as follows:

Smith, J. A. (2003). Book Title. New York: Publisher.

Jones, J. L. (2007). Article title. Journal Title, volume #, page numbers

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

ABSENCE FROM EXAM:

“Excused absence for a missed exam is not automatic and is granted at the discretion of the instructor (in the case of term exams) or the student’s Faculty (in the case of final exams).”

Instructors and Faculties are not required to grant excused absences for unacceptable reasons that include, but are not limited to personal events such as vacations, weddings, or travel arrangements. **When a student is absent from a term or final exam without acceptable excuse, a final grade will be computed using a raw score of zero for the exam missed.** Any student who applies for or obtains an excused absence by making false statements will be liable under the Code of Student Behaviour.

MISSED MID-TERM EXAM:

Students must contact the instructor within two working days or as soon as the student is able, in regards to the circumstance underlying the absence. See below for documentation to be presented for consideration of an excused absence. Students who are unable to write a mid-term exam on the scheduled date based on reasons normally granted by the University (e.g., medical emergency) will write a make-up exam at a later date to be arranged between the student and instructor. Under no circumstance shall the weight of a missed midterm exam be transferred onto the final exam.

DEFERRED FINAL EXAM:

If you fail to write the **FINAL EXAM** you must formally apply to **your Faculty office within two working days** following the missed final exam in order to be considered for a deferred final examination. The decision to grant a deferred final exam is **not** the instructor's. Deferred examinations are intended to accommodate students who have experienced an incapacitating illness or severe domestic affliction; applications based on minor or inconsequential ailments will not be approved.

Note: A deferred final examination will not be approved if a student (a) has not been in regular attendance where attendance and/or participation are required, and/or, (b) excluding the final exam, has completed less than half of the assigned work, according to the Calendar."

Documentation to be presented for consideration for an excused absence is as follows:

- For **medical illnesses**, students can present one of the following:
 - **"University of Alberta Medical Statement"** signed by a doctor (*this cannot be required, but will be accepted if provided in lieu of other documents*)
 - **"Medical Declaration Form for Students"** (*for Faculty of Arts students*)
 - **"Statutory Declaration"** (*for students in Faculties other than Arts, to be obtained from home Faculty or the Office of the Registrar*)

- For **other acceptable absences**, such as domestic afflictions or religious convictions, the student should submit appropriate documentation to the situation. This could include the following:
 - For a death in the family – a copy of the death certificate
 - For a religious conflict – a letter from the church or pastor
 - For a car accident – a copy of the accident report
 - For other serious afflictions – consult with Instructor or Department about appropriate documents

IN-CLASS EXAMS:

Your student photo I.D. is required at exams to verify your identity. At the discretion of the instructor, students may or may not be allowed to begin an examination after it has been in progress for more than 30 minutes. Students must remain in the exam room for at least 30 minutes from the time the exam commenced before they can leave. Consumption of food is not allowed during exams.

ACCESS TO PAST OR REPRESENTATIVE EVALUATIVE COURSE

MATERIAL: Sample exam material will be discussed in class or posted on e-class.

CELL PHONES & RECORDING DEVICE:

"Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other

teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s)."

GRADING:

Your performances on the mid-term exam, seminar presentation, term paper, and the final exam will be added together and calculated as a percentage. Your percentage grade will then be converted to the four-point scale as shown below. A grade of 89.4 will be rounded down to 89. A grade of 89.5 will be rounded off to 90.

Description	Percentage	Grade	Value
Excellent	90-100	A+	4.0
	86-89	A	4.0
Very Good	82-85	A-	3.7
Good	78-81	B+	3.3
	74-77	B	3.0
	70-73	B-	2.7
Satisfactory	66-69	C+	2.3
	62-65	C	2.0
	58-61	C-	1.7
Poor	54-57	D+	1.3
Minimal Pass	50-53	D	1.0
Fail	0-49	F	0.0

Detailed Topics/Readings

Week/Date	Topic	Chapters: Leming	Chapters: Northcott	Videos/DVDs	Supplementary Material	Activities
WK 1/ May 8 & 10	Introduction to Dying, Death, and Bereavement The North American Experience of Death; Growing Up with Death	1 2 & 3	 1 & 2	Death: Trip of a Lifetime I. The Chasm (60 min) Death: Trip of a Lifetime II. The Good Death (60 min)	Becker: Denial of Death Edgework: Tempting Death Dangerous Lifestyles Dangerous Sports Dangerous Work High Steel Ironworkers	Groups: Make list of things to be done when a parent dies suddenly? Present to Class. Groups: Does the media sensitize or de-sensitize people about death? Present to Class. Individuals: Write your epitaph*. Share with class. Analyze content.
WK 2/ May 15 & 17	Perspectives on Death The Dying Process; Living with Dying	4 5 & 6	4 5	[God Said “Ha” (85 min) or That’s My Time? (66 min)] My Healing Journey: Seven Years with Cancer (45 min)	John Donne: Death Be Not Proud (a poem about death). Can be found online by google search Albom: Tuesdays with Morrie	Individuals: Tell about your first experience with death, your age at the time, its effect on you, etc. Groups: Discuss how new infectious diseases (AIDS, SARS, West Nile, Ebola, Bird Flu, H1N1, etc.), natural disasters, war/terrorism affect us today. Present to Class
WK 3/ May 22 & 24 May 24	Dying in the Health-Care System; Biomedical Issues and Euthanasia (including Assisted Suicide) Mid-Term Exam	7 & 8	3	Who Owns My Life? The Sue Rodriguez Story (47 min)	.	Lecture/Class discussion or group discussions on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. Debate for and against. Mid-term exam preparation should involve materials and lectures covered up to this point.
WK 4/ May 29 & 31	Suicide Death Rituals; The Death Industry	9 10 & 11		The Boy Whose Skin Fell Off—Jonny Kennedy (50 min) The Undertaking (50 min)	Parallels between birth and death Green funerals Von Hagens’ <i>Body Worlds</i> exhibit	Personal stories Individuals: Write your own obituary stating how, when (at what age), and where you died and funeral arrangements. Share with class. Analyze content.
WK 5/ June 5 & 7	Legal Issues Term Paper Due on June 7	12				Field Trip to Funeral Home: Connelly-Mckinley Funeral Home located at

						10011 114 Street. Date and time to be announced in class
WK 6/ June 12	Bereavement and Grieving	13 & 14	6	Death: Trip of a Lifetime III. Letting Go (60 min)	Karen Martin's Model of Grieving	
June 14 (tentative). Note: Student should verify the actual date from Bear Track	Final Exam					

***Epitaph:** an inscription on a grave in memory of a person buried there; a brief statement commemorating a deceased person. As opposed to **eulogy:** a commendatory formal statement; high praise; or **obituary:** a notice of a person's death usually with a short biographical

Disclaimer: *The information in this Course Outline regarding lecture schedule is subject to change; any changes will be announced in class. Note: Videos and documentaries listed in this syllabus will be showed as time permits. Some of them may not be showed because of time.*

"Policy about course outlines can be found in [Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading](#) of the University Calendar".